THOUGHTS ABOUT EVALUATING PARTNERSHIPS IN CONSERVATION

Partnership & Community Collaboration Academy

Managing by Network

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OVERVIEW OF SESSION

1. "Wicked Problems" & Evaluation Definition

2. Context

3. Evaluation and Planning

4. Evaluation and Assessment

5. Some Consumer Tips

6. Final $.02

I. "WICKED PROBLEMS"

- **Wicked problems**

  - Nothing is permanent (static). Things are dynamic.

  - Solving one "problem" opens the door to new types of frequently unanticipated, new problems (e.g., computer and world of work)

  - Many problems belie simple solutions based on "common sense" – intuition, experience, values.

Horst Ritell and Melvin Webber, "General Theories of Planning," 1974

EVALUATORS' ADDED VALUE

- **Evaluators help create and interpret bases of evidence to better assist "stakeholders" to frame their efforts and understandings when common sense does not suffice.**

  - ➢Acting and reflecting
  - ➢Perceived problems and potential solutions

EVALUATION DEFINITION

- Evaluation involves systematic thinking about a program, raising meaningful questions, gathering and assessing evidence to provide answers, and applying all to strengthen a program (Russ-Eft and Preskill, 2009).

- Evaluation consequently includes more than monitoring and measurement.

THEORY OF CHANGE

- **"Theory of change"**
  - Causal theory connecting means to ends ("outcomes"), linearly or not
  - Theory must be empirically testable.

- **Two components to any theory of change:**
  - Planning – clarifying/honing what is being intended
  - Assessment – did what happen work as intended

- **Different approaches to doing both**
  - Planning (including "logic mapping")
  - Assessment (e.g., survey methods)

- **Conservation implies engaging in two interrelated dynamic systems**
  - Human derived systems
  - Non-human derived systems.

- **Evaluation of conservation must be able to assess the interplay of conservation imposition into both systems.**

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION OF PARTNERSHIPS

- **Variations in partnerships:**

  - Varying levels of "involvement"
    - Informing
    - Consultation
    - Control

  - Varying areas of "involvement"
    - Planning
    - Implementation
    - Assessment

ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION OF PARTNERSHIPS

- Partnerships are means to an ends:
  - Means involves conservation strategies
 - Ends involves biodiversity (or other) ends

PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATING PARTNERSHIPS

- Evaluating partnerships in conservation implies understanding how partnerships are intending to achieve outcomes.
  - Biodiversity outcomes
  - Other types of outcomes

- Evaluating partnerships points to two questions for assessing.
  - When are partnerships succeeding and/or failing?
  - What are the important factors contributing to such outcomes?

- **Logic model components**

Activities

Outputs

Outcomes

Impacts
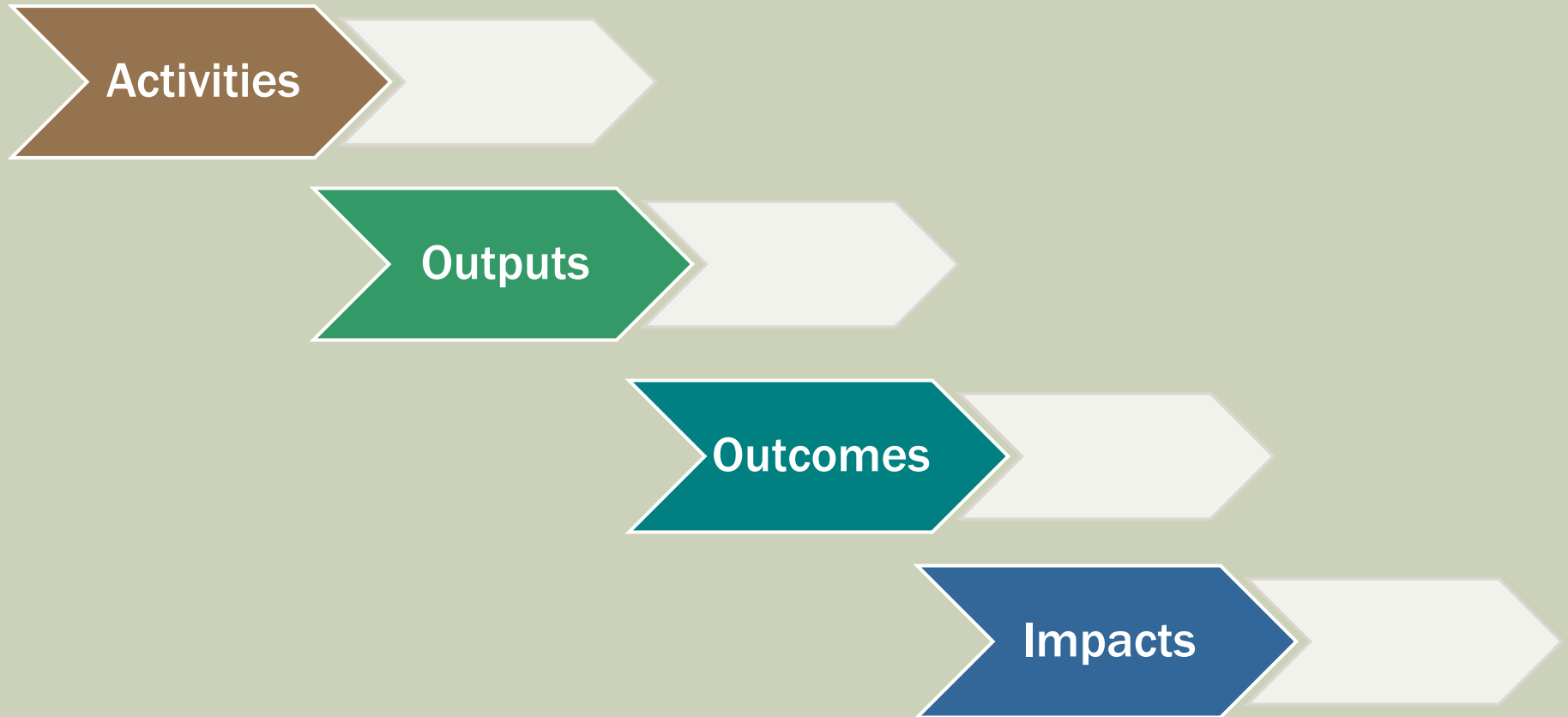
LOGIC MODEL EXAMPLE: CONDOR CONSERVATION

- *Problem: Ranchers are using lead ammo to eliminate varmints. Condors digest the lead in the varmints, causing deaths.*
- *Solution: Change behavior of ranchers to not use lead ammo:*

- Partnerships with ranchers includes <u>education and subsidies for ammo alternatives</u> (activities) →

  - Changes in ranchers use of <u>ammo types</u> (outputs) →

    - Fewer <u>lead-infested carcasses</u> (outcomes) →

      - Decreased condor mortalities (impacts) →

LOGIC MODEL'S STRENGTHS

1. Easy way to clarify what one is intending to do.

2. Easy way to develop tools to assess what one is intending to do.

3. Presents a compelling vernacular in moving attention away from "inputs" (e.g., funds and rules) and towards "performance" (outcomes, impacts)

LOGIC MODEL'S LIMITS

1. **Oversimplifies things in a world in which things mostly don't work linearly.**

2. **Does not easily allow for testing of alternative explanations ("counterfactuals")**

3. **In practice, confounds understanding with listing of *arrays* of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts.**

NON-LINEAR LOGIC MAPPING

- Step 1: "Backward logic mapping:"

Outcome ←

Threat or Opportunity ←

Strategy ←

BACKWARD LOGIC MAP EXAMPLE

- *Problem: Decreased native apache trout*

- **Outcome**: Reverse decreases in
    native apache trout

    - ←**Threats:**
        - Introduction of non-native trout species
        - Fragmentation of habitat

        - ← **Strategies:**
            - Buffering of native apache trout habitat,
            - Removal of apache trout
            - Partnerships between Apache tribe, Arizona DNR, FWS and angler groups

STEP 2: FORWARD LOGIC MAPPING

- Forward logic mapping ("results chains") comprise a series of if/then statements.

- Results chains are sequential but not necessarily linear:
  - One point can lead to multiple points
  - Multiple points can lead to one point
  - The sequence can reverse paths ("feedback loops")

- Emphasis is on "results" and not "process"

TRYING A NEW TOY: A FORWARD LOGIC MAP

- Central issue is partnerships for managing conservation. What are we trying to achieve?
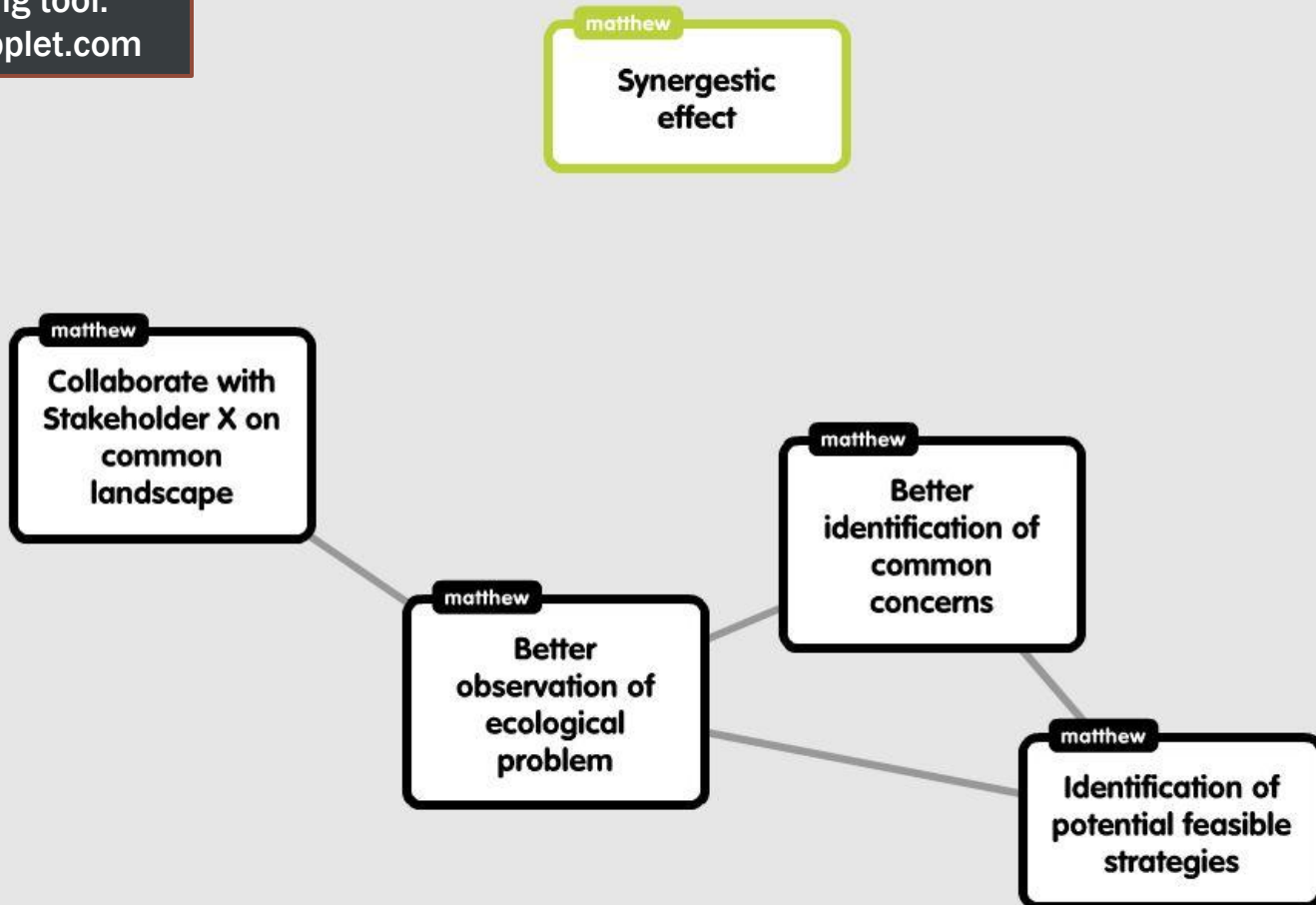- If we collaborate with XXX,

Then ??

IF ??

Then ??

LOGIC MAPPING EXERCISE
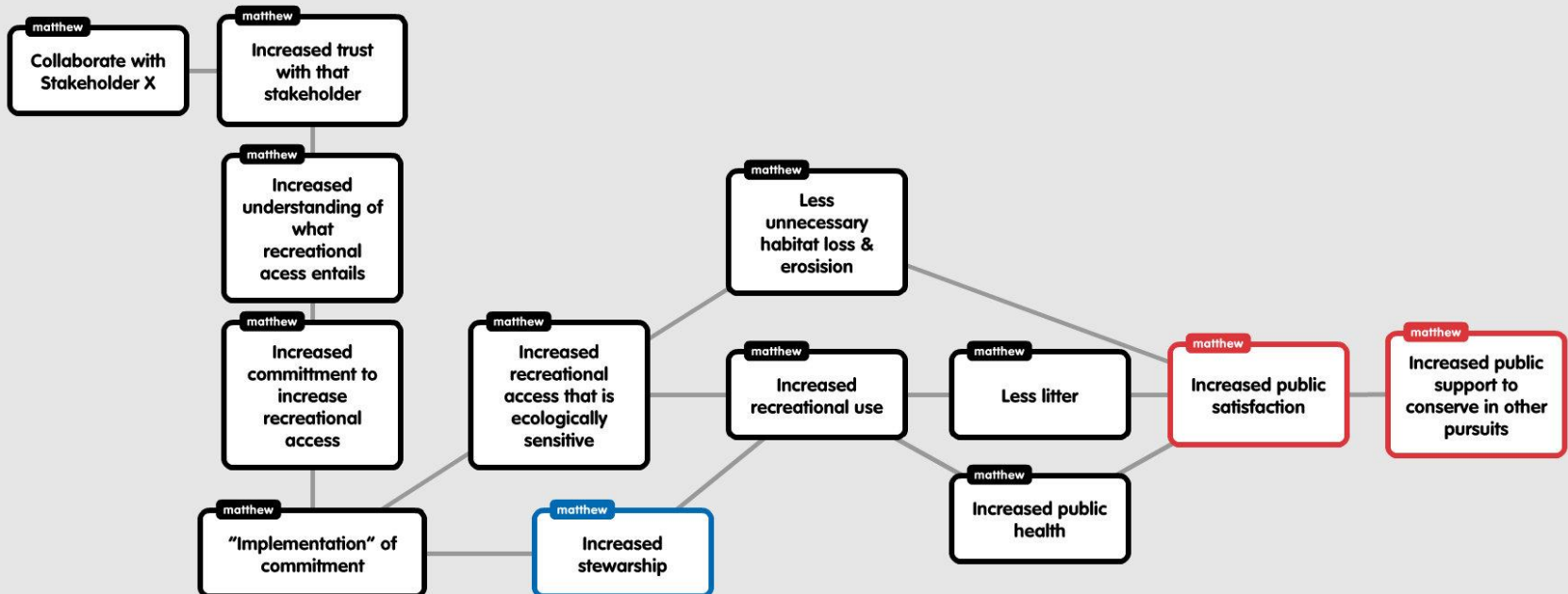## TUESDAY GROUP ONE & TWO: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP COLLABORATION OF LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION COOPERATIVES

Mapping tool:
www.popplet.com

matthew
Synergestic effect

matthew
Collaborate with Stakeholder X on common landscape

matthew
Better observation of ecological problem

matthew
Better identification of common concerns
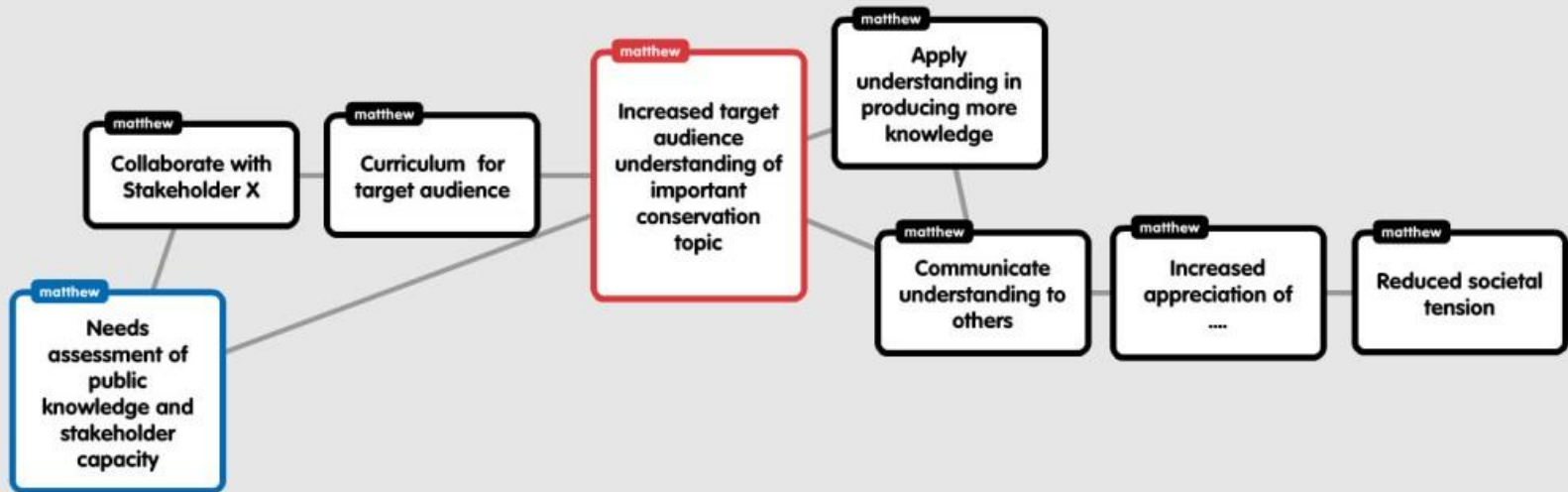
matthew
Identification of potential feasible strategies

Mapping tool: www.popplet.com

LOGIC MAPPING EXERCISE
WEDNESDAY GROUP TWO: STRENGTHEN UNDERSTANDING OF NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE AT A NATIONAL PARK

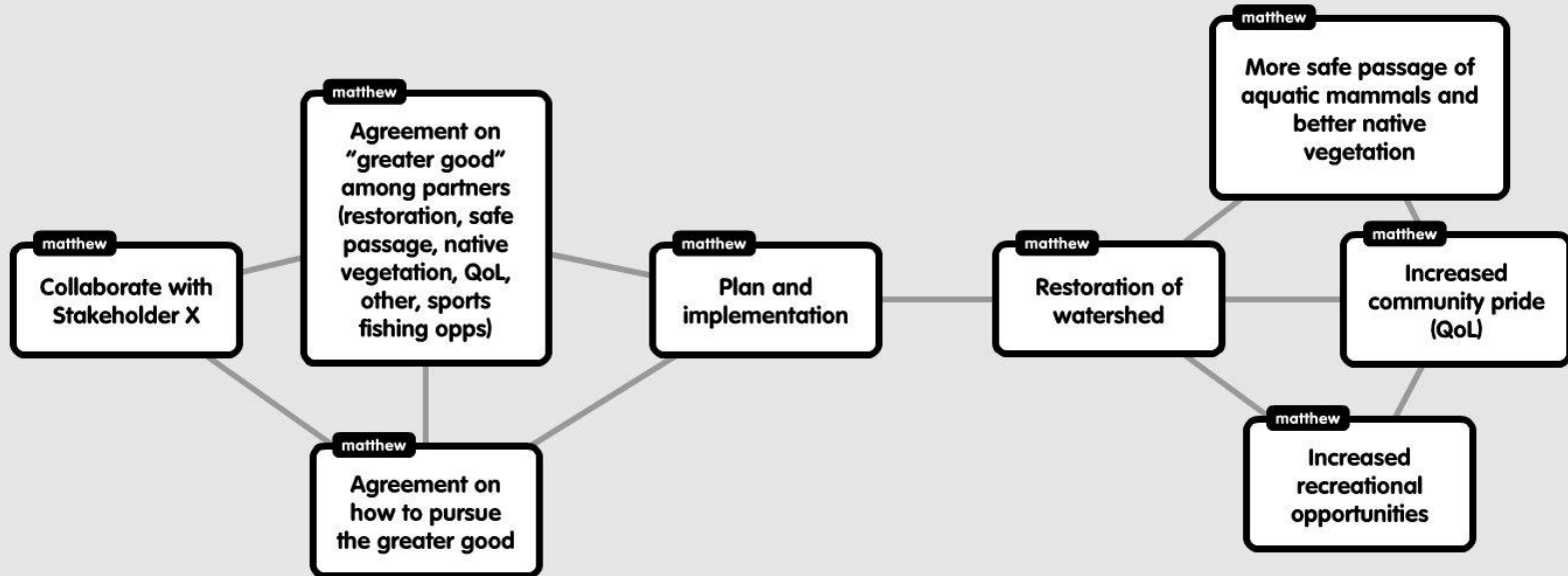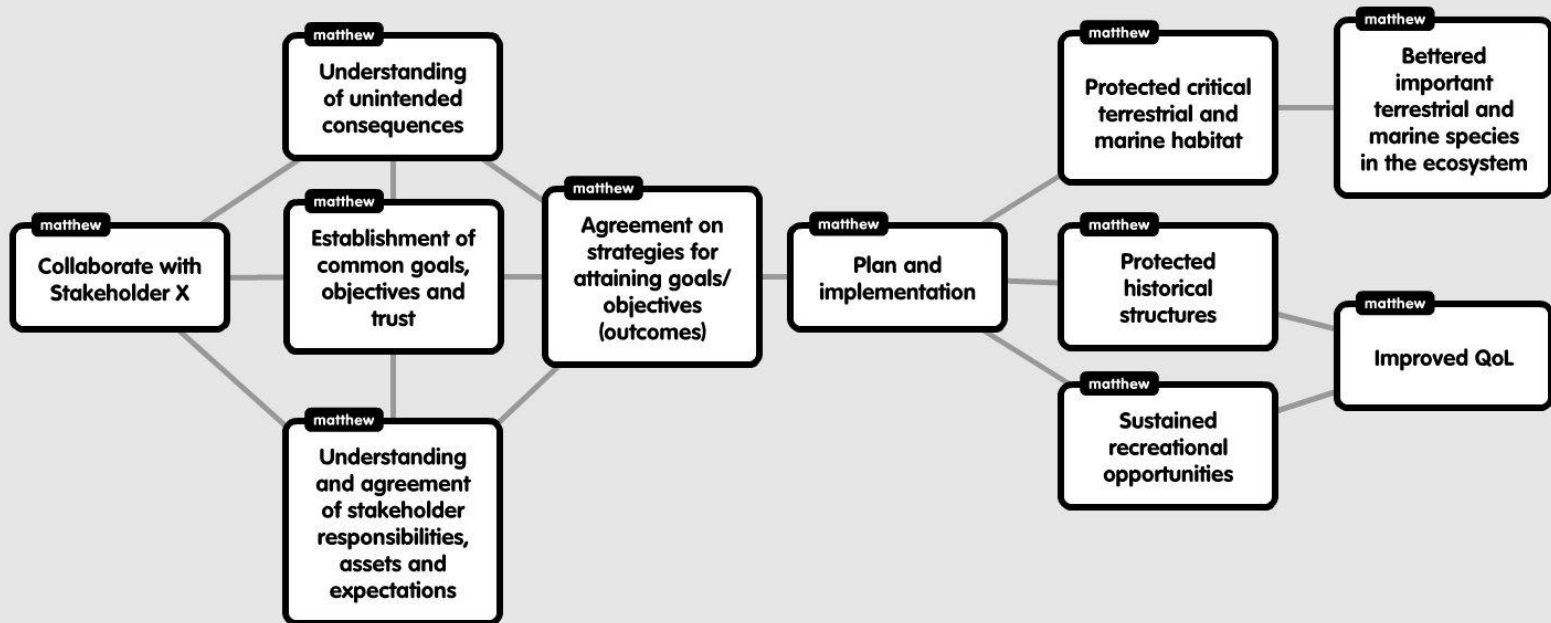Mapping tool:
www.popplet.com

Mapping tool:
www.popplet.com

LOGIC MAPPING EXERCISE
THURSDAY GROUP TWO: PROTECTING NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES AND SUPPORTING RECREATION

Mapping tool:
www.popplet.com

IV. EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

- Logic mapping helps to clarify and refine what (and how) one is trying to intend.

- A major core of evaluation is <u>assessing</u> how well one is achieving what one is intending.

- Cardinal principle: estimating counterfactual:

  - What otherwise would have expected to happen in absence of trying the strategies (i.e., "net change")?
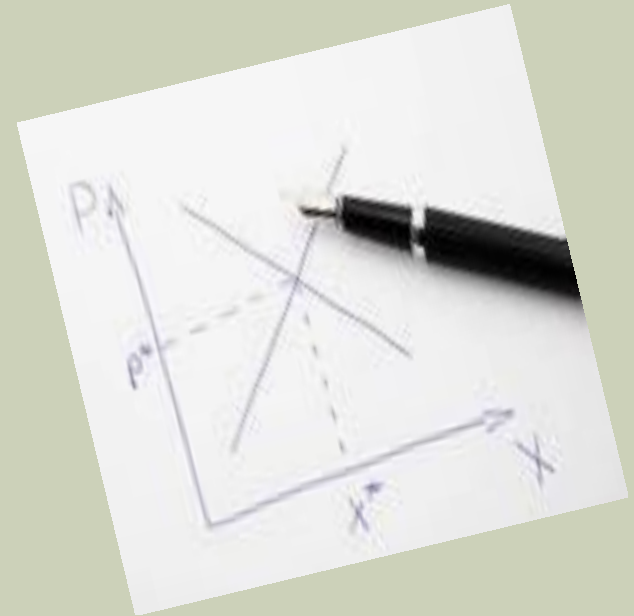
MULTIPLE APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

- **Traditional scientific taxonomy**
  - **Design**
    1. **True experimental**
    2. **Quasi-experimental**
    3. **Natural experimental**

  - **Method (data collection and analysis)**
    1. **Quantitative**
    2. **Qualitative**

- **Caveat: evaluation is an <u>applied</u> science**
  - **Since assessment has to be feasible and useful to practitioners, demonstrating contribution can frequently be much more valued than causality.**

ASSESSING EVALUATION ASSESSMENT

- **What makes for good evaluation?**
  - *Validity* of information

  - *Usefulness* of information

FOUR CRITERIA FOR VALIDITY

1. "Theoretical Validity"

2. "Construct Validity"

3. "Internal Validity"

4. "External Validity"

VALIDITY CRITERIA

1. **Theoretical validity:**
   - Theory for explaining change

2. **Construct validity**
   - Approach used in design and method for measurement

VALIDITY CRITERIA

3. **Internal validity**

   - Reasonableness of ruling out alternative approaches (counterfactual)

4. **External validity**

   - Ability to generalize (and potentially adopt/replicate) to other circumstances

FOUR CRITERIA FOR USEFULNESS

1. "Enlightenment"

2. "Guidance"

3. "Feasibility"

4. "Distribution"

USEFULNESS: ENLIGHTENMENT & GUIDANCE

- **"Enlightenment"**
  - Extent to which evaluation/evaluator helps "client" and/or other stakeholders understand the conservation work in which they're engaged
    - Framing of problem ("opportunity")
    - Framing of potential strategies for addressing problem

- **"Guidance"**
  - Extent to which evaluation findings leads client (with other stakeholders) to make specific decisions
    - Issue 1: Types of partnerships formed
    - Issue 2: Ways in which partnerships are used

USEFULNESS: FEASIBILITY & DISTRIBUTION

- **"Feasibility"**
  - Extent to which evaluation approach for planning and assessment can be adopted (e.g., longitudinal SNA)
  - Extent to which evaluation findings and recommendations can be used (e.g., changing locus of control over program decisions)

- **"Distribution"**
  - Whose usefulness matters most?
    - Vertical considerations
    - Horizontal considerations

V. SOME CONSUMER TIPS

- Deciding on In-house versus Third-Party evaluation
  - Understanding of organizational perceptions, experiences and values ("common sense")
  - Independence
  - Expertise
  - Credibility
  - Adoptability/transferability

CONSUMER TIP #3

- Avoid "black box" designs:
  - Understanding outcomes implies discerning effectiveness of adopted strategies vis-a-vis implementation.

Good strategy, Good implementation	Good strategy, Bad implementation
Poor strategy, Good implementation	Poor strategy, Poor implementation

MORE CONSUMER TIPS

- Fixed price versus other contractual matters
  - Allowing for emerging learning to wicked problems
  - Managing rogue contractors

- Practicing what gets preached
  - Focus on outcomes and not inputs/process

FINAL $.02

- Good monitoring and measurement means it is assessing meaningful theory. The best evaluators are those that can do logic mapping (program planning) very well.

- Good evaluators apply concerns for validity with those for usefulness.

FINAL $.02

- Good evaluation practices of partnerships in conservation requires evaluator smarts in working with folks not necessarily trained in social scientific understandings of human behavior:

  - Diversity of types of partnerships

  - Diversity of levels of partnerships

  - Diversity of linkages of partnership approaches to frequently multiple and conflicting ecological and other outcomes.

FINAL $.02

"Good evaluation fosters learning over compliance in adapting to managing wicked problems."

~ Matt Birnbaum, Ph.D.